

# IQVIA Snapshot

## Prevalence and Treatment of Mental Health Disorders

### Trends in the use of antidepressants in Canada, 2019–2023

IQVIA's definition of the therapeutic class, psychotherapeutics (medication treatments for mental health), includes antidepressants, anxiolytics/hypnotics, antipsychotics, and psychostimulants. Anxiety disorders, including insomnia, are the most common of all mental health problems. It is estimated that one in 10 Canadians is affected.<sup>1</sup> Clinical depression is a complex mood disorder that may be caused by genetic predisposition, personality, stress, and neurochemistry. Treatments include psychoeducation, psychotherapy, drug therapy, and brain stimulation therapies.<sup>2</sup>

This Snapshot presents some highlights drawn from the Dashboard on the use of antidepressants, which

are mainly used to treat major depression and anxiety disorders. Prevalence and demographic characteristics of consumption in the general Canadian population are presented for 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023. Refer to page 7 for the limitations associated with using IQVIA data.

#### National highlights on the use of antidepressants

Between 2019 and 2023, the prevalence rate of individuals who received antidepressants from community pharmacies in Canada increased from 15.4% to 16.4%. The number of users, as well as prescriptions and units (tablets/capsules) dispensed, increased by 12.2%, 11.3% and 17.3%, respectively, over the same period.

#### General statistics on antidepressant use in Canada and variations 2019 - 2023

	PREVALENCE	INDIVIDUALS	PRESCRIPTIONS DISPENSED	UNITS DISPENSED*
2019	15.4%	5,813,370	59,675,833	2,044,045,242
2020	15.7%	5,945,457	63,312,155	2,190,907,613
2021	16.8%	6,452,472	65,103,241	2,364,188,982
2022	16.3%	6,425,393	67,984,504	2,486,503,195
2023	16.4%	6,672,645 ▲ 12.2%	70,457,279 ▲ 11.3%	2,570,524,663 ▲ 17.3%

1. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-living/your-health/diseases/mental-health-anxiety-disorders.html>

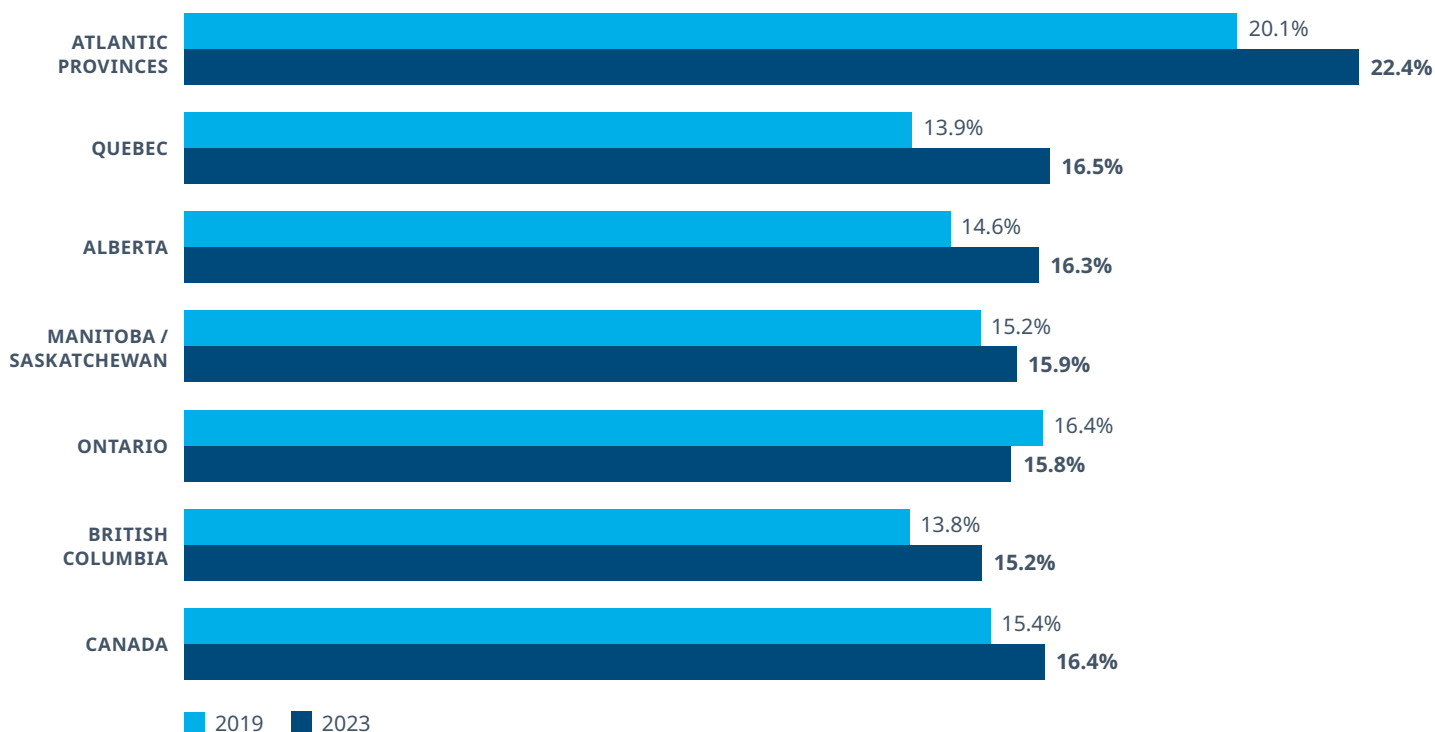
2. <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/depression>

\* Since prescription durations vary from province to province (e.g. 30 or 90 days), units represent a relevant comparative indicator.

## Provincial prevalence trends

Between 2019 and 2023, antidepressant use increased in all Canadian provinces except Ontario. In 2023, the Atlantic provinces had the highest prevalence rate in the country, reaching 22.4%, with a peak in Newfoundland and Labrador of 25.6% (not shown in table).

### Prevalence of antidepressants by province, 2019–2023



IQVIA has recently developed new indicators to enrich the reports, by integrating data on health regions from various Canadian provinces. Among these, Ontario is subdivided into 26 regions and Quebec has 15. The following table presents some examples. For more information, do not hesitate to contact us.

PREVALENCE OF ANTIDEPRESSANT DISPENSING BY SELECTED PROVINCIAL HEALTH REGIONS		
	2019	2023
INTERIOR HEALTH (BC)	18.8%	19.8%
SOUTH (AB)	17.9%	20.7%
MIDDLESEX-LONDON (ON)	27.9%	25.6%
NEWFOUNDLAND (ATL)	21.7%	25.6%
GASPÉSIE-ÎLE-DE-LA-MADELEINE (QC)	22.7%	29.8%

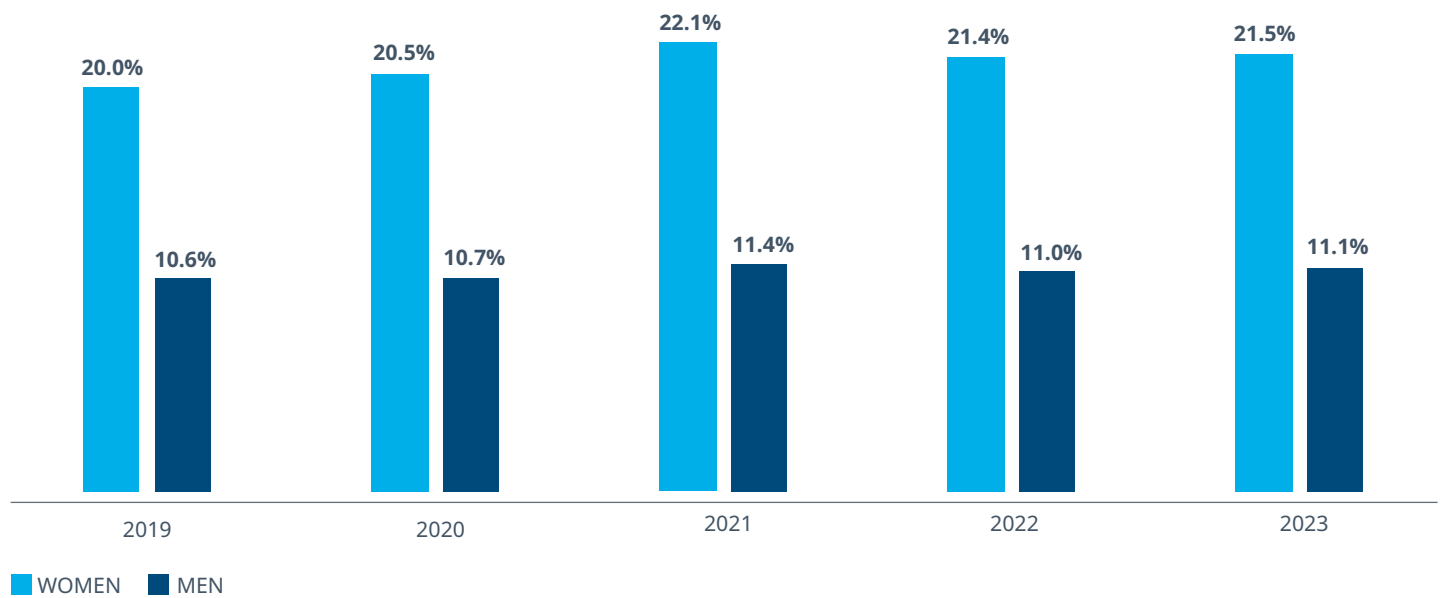
In Canada, over 2.5 billion units (tablets/capsules) of antidepressants were dispensed in 2023, a 26% increase from 2019. The number of units dispensed to individuals increased over the five-year period in all Canadian provinces. The Atlantic provinces had the highest increase at 31%.

ANTIDEPRESSANT UNITS DISPENSED BY PROVINCE AND INCREASE BETWEEN 2019 AND 2023		
ONTARIO	893,173,292	▲ 21%
QUEBEC	617,267,408	▲ 28%
BRITISH COLUMBIA	308,196,148	▲ 27%
ALBERTA	285,622,553	▲ 30%
ATLANTIC PROVINCES	254,611,027	▲ 31%
MANITOBA / SASKATCHEWAN	211,654,235	▲ 27%
CANADA	2,570,524,663	▲ 26%

### Demographic analysis

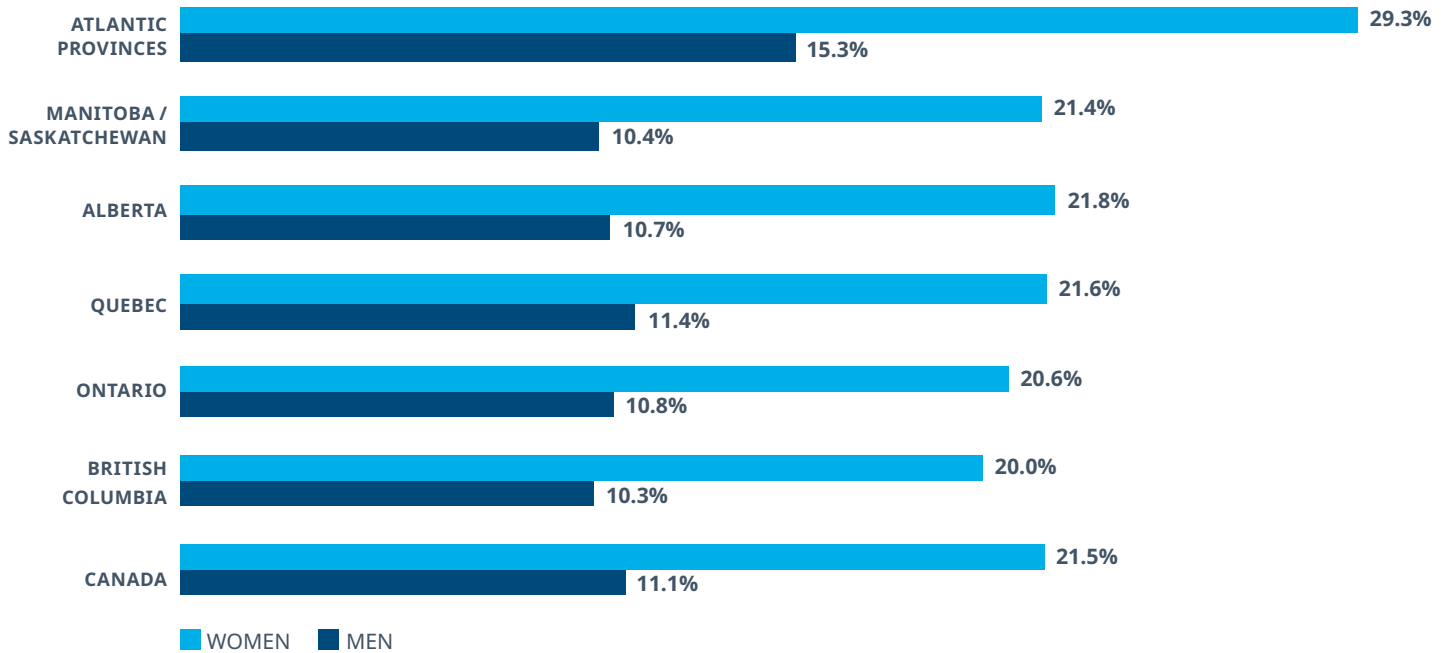
Both men and women had relatively stable prevalence rates over the five years observed. Prevalence was highest in both women and men in 2021. Prevalence in women was nearly double that of men over the five years presented (1 in 5 women and 1 in 9 men). In 2023, the number of prescriptions dispensed to women was 46.5 million and to men 24 million (not shown).

Prevalence of antidepressant dispensing by gender, Canada



In 2023, the prevalence rate of antidepressant use among women was approximately twice that of men in all provinces, peaking at 29.3% in the Atlantic provinces.

**Prevalence of antidepressant dispensing by gender and province, 2023**



Between 2019 and 2023, the prevalence of antidepressant use increased in all age groups in all Canadian provinces, except those aged 65 and over. The increase was particularly pronounced among those aged 12 to 17 and 18 to 24, while it was more moderate among those aged 25 to 44 and 45 to 64. In contrast, among those aged 65 and over, a significant decrease was observed in all provinces, with a 13.7% reduction in Ontario.

PREVALENCE OF ANTIDEPRESSANT DISPENSING BY PROVINCE AND AGE GROUP, 2019 AND 2023										
PROVINCES	12 - 17		18 - 24		25 - 44		45 - 64		65+	
	2019	2023	2019	2023	2019	2023	2019	2023	2019	2023
ATLANTIC PROVINCES	2.2%	8.0%	12.7%	20.7%	22.0%	26.8%	21.4%	24.6%	36.0%	30.3%
ALBERTA	2.5%	7.4%	9.8%	16.1%	15.2%	18.7%	19.0%	19.8%	32.3%	25.8%
QUEBEC	1.1%	4.3%	5.8%	12.4%	14.1%	18.3%	16.6%	19.9%	27.5%	25.1%
ONTARIO	1.7%	5.2%	9.9%	14.5%	17.1%	17.6%	18.9%	18.0%	<b>38.5%</b>	<b>24.8%</b>
MANITOBA / SASKATCHEWAN	2.0%	6.6%	10.5%	14.8%	17.7%	19.4%	19.2%	19.7%	28.5%	23.6%
BRITISH COLUMBIA	1.7%	6.3%	8.5%	14.3%	15.1%	17.9%	15.6%	17.1%	24.6%	20.2%
CANADA	1.7%	5.7%	9.0%	14.6%	16.2%	18.6%	18.1%	19.1%	30.5%	24.7%

In 2023, the prevalence of antidepressant use was significantly higher among women than men in all provinces in Canada, regardless of age. The Atlantic provinces had the highest prevalence rates for both women and men in all age groups. Furthermore, in all provinces, women aged 18 to 24 had a prevalence more than twice that of men.

PREVALENCE OF ANTIDEPRESSANT DISPENSING BY GENDER, PROVINCE, AND AGE GROUP, 2023						
PROVINCES	GENDER	12 - 17	18 - 24	25 - 44	45 - 64	65+
ATLANTIC PROVINCES	W	10.7%	30.7%	35.6%	31.6%	<b>37.2%</b>
	M	5.5%	11.4%	17.7%	17.1%	22.4%
ALBERTA	W	9.7%	23.8%	25.6%	26.1%	32.3%
	M	5.2%	9.0%	11.8%	13.4%	18.5%
QUEBEC	W	6.0%	18.9%	24.7%	25.5%	30.5%
	M	2.8%	6.2%	12.0%	14.2%	18.8%
ONTARIO	W	7.0%	21.4%	23.2%	23.0%	30.0%
	M	3.6%	8.0%	11.8%	12.7%	18.5%
MANITOBA / SASKATCHEWAN	W	8.9%	22.4%	26.7%	26.0%	29.0%
	M	4.4%	7.9%	12.1%	13.4%	17.2%
BRITISH COLUMBIA	W	8.2%	21.0%	24.2%	21.7%	25.0%
	M	4.4%	7.9%	11.5%	12.2%	14.8%
CANADA	W	7.6%	21.8%	24.9%	24.5%	30.1%
	M	3.9%	7.9%	12.2%	13.4%	18.2%

In Canada, for the five years observed, antidepressant prescriptions were written primarily by general practitioners (~80%) and psychiatrists (~15%). Similar proportions were observed at the prescriber level in the six provinces covered by this report.

## Data Sources and Methodology

The statistics are generated from [fully anonymized] prescriptions for psychotherapeutic medications dispensed by a panel of community pharmacies during 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023, and correspond to approximately 80% of all prescriptions dispensed in Canada (new Rx and refills). Estimation algorithms were used to assess the missing 20%, thus obtaining a complete picture of the dispensing of these drugs and allowing a representative analysis. Population data from Statistics Canada<sup>3</sup> was used to calculate proportions and per capita rates.

This report is based on the following IQVIA data services: IQVIA Geographic Prescription Monitoring (GPM), IQVIA Longitudinal Prescription data, and IQVIA Prescriber-level data.

### List of molecules included in this study:

ANTIDEPRESSANTS	
1 <sup>st</sup> generation	2 <sup>nd</sup> generation
Amitriptyline	Bupropion
Amoxapine	Citalopram
Clomipramine	Desvenlafaxine
Desipramine	Duloxetine
Doxepin	Escitalopram
Imipramine	Esketamine
Moclobemide	Fluoxetine
Nortriptyline	Fluvoxamine
Phenelzine	Levomilnacipran
Tranlycypromine	Mirtazapine
Trimipramine	Paroxetine
	Sertraline
	Trazodone
	Venlafaxine
	Vilazodone
	Vortioxetine

The IQVIA data used to produce this Snapshot includes both generations of antidepressants. The most recent second generation antidepressants include selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs); mixed serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs); and alpha-2 receptor antagonists, which have the same clinical efficacy as first-generation medications (tricyclic antidepressants), but with a different adverse-effect profile that justifies prescribing the most recent molecules as first-line treatment.<sup>4</sup> **It should be noted that certain molecules of these two generations are sometimes prescribed for indications other than depressive disorders, such as pain, migraines, and fibromyalgia.**

3. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/dt-td/Index-eng.cfm?LANG=E&SUB=98P1001&SR=0&RPP=10&SORT=date>

4. <https://pharmacomedicale.org/medicaments/par-specialites/item/antidepresseurs-les-points-essentiels>  
<https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2013/1115/p687.html>

## Limitations

There are limitations to the use of IQVIA data, which does not include information on:

- Prescriptions written but never dispensed
- Prescriptions dispensed in hospitals and prisons
- Medications not taken by patients
- Diagnoses for which prescriptions were dispensed
- Clinical indication or morbidity

*This report was produced independently by IQVIA Canada as a public service, without industry or government funding. IQVIA complies with all legislation relating to the protection of personal health information, and IQVIA does not collect any data on prescription drugs that can identify a patient or that can be used for this purpose.*

## About IQVIA

IQVIA is a leading global provider of advanced analytics, technology solutions, and clinical research services to the life sciences industry. IQVIA creates intelligent connections across all aspects of healthcare through its analytics, transformative technology, metadata resources and extensive domain expertise. IQVIA Connected Intelligence™ delivers relevant insights with speed and agility—enabling its customers to accelerate the clinical development and commercialization of innovative medication treatments that improve healthcare outcomes for patients. With approximately 87,000 employees, IQVIA conducts operations in more than 100 countries.

Established in Canada since the 1960s with over 1,600 employees, IQVIA is a leading provider of evidence-based health information services to the Canadian medical and pharmaceutical industry. Its excellent reputation is based on its ability to forge partnerships with various stakeholders in the public and private sectors who share the same goal: to constantly improve the quality of health care in a more connected ecosystem.

Offering the world's largest source of healthcare data, IQVIA provides Canada-wide data for both the public and private sectors. IQVIA's insights and execution capabilities help biotech, medical device, and pharmaceutical companies, medical researchers, government agencies, payers, and other healthcare stakeholders tap into a deeper understanding of disease, human behaviour, and scientific advances to improve patient health.



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